

April 2006

Friends of Warrandyte State Park



Newsletter

Friends of Warrandyte State Park (FOWSP) Inc. PO Box 220 Warrandyte 3113
ABN 94170156655/ACN A0024890C

Park Gates Trial

By Mike Coupar

At the last committee meeting Ranger-in-Charge, Andrew Nixon, informed FOWSP that the entry gates at Pound Bend Reserve, Jumping Creek Reserve and Norman Reserve are being left permanently open as part of a two month trial that will conclude with the end of daylight saving. Locking and unlocking gates takes an hour or more per day. Leaving them open, we were told, frees up rangers time to concentrate on more important duties such as environmental works.

Given that ranger numbers are low and duties have increased with the addition of more land, FOWSP supports this move. However, there are concerns that the trial has not been advertised ahead of time and that signs displaying gate closure times are still in place. Therefore many people have been unaware of the new policy. Consequently any results gained from this trial are relatively meaningless as it is unlikely that the public have taken full advantage of the open gates.

For the trial to effectively gauge vandalism and noise level, particularly on hot summer and autumn nights when alcohol is flowing freely, information on non-closure of gates should have been in place at the entrance to the reserves and local residents notified well ahead of the trial.

Overall FOWSP are in favour of leaving gates open if it allows rangers more time for natural values management and gives people permanent access to the Park. However, there is inconsistency in Park policy because, at the same time, areas of the Park have been permanently closed to the public. Most notably

was the closure of the mines and tunnels on Fourth Hill despite protests from groups including FOWSP, and the fact that there had been no reported accidents.

The latest area to be permanently closed off is the access track from the car park/lookout on Pound Road down to the entrance of the Pound Bend tunnel. This action was prompted by a coroners report on the death of a young man who entered the river at this point in a toy inflatable raft and was swept into the tunnel and drowned. Tragic as this was, the man was intoxicated and not wearing a life jacket.

The issue here is not the safety of the access track or the river or the tunnel itself, but rather the abuse of alcohol in such places. While Parks Victoria was in no way held responsible for the accident that took place in December 2004, they have been instructed to erect signs warning of the dangers. In my opinion this is not addressing the real problem which has to do with the consumption of alcohol and its promotion by the liquor industry.

In many coastal areas alcohol bans have been imposed by local councils along foreshores and in other public places. Surely Parks Victoria could do the same, rather than

blaming the natural environment?



Bush Backyard

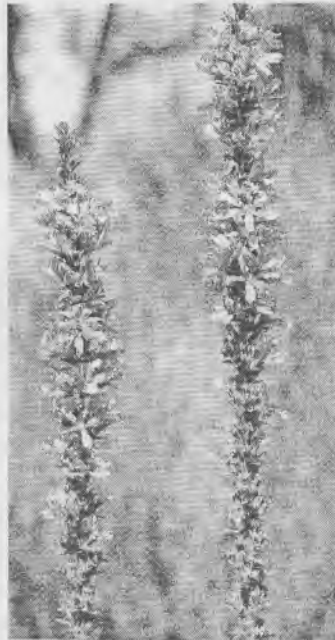
A Purple Parch

By Pat Coupar

My garden pond is looking very lush at the moment. Because of the warm weather, growth of water plants like Nardoo, Water Milfoil and Marshworts (look alike waterlilies) has been abundant. So much so that I have had to thin out many of these rhizomatous aquatic plants.

I have also had to skim off most of the Ferny Azolla (see below) that divides rampantly in hot weather.

However, one plant that I cannot get enough of is Purple Loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*) which, from one plant, has self-seeded into other pots and onto the bank of the pond. At the moment the plants are displaying stunning spikes of bright purple flowers.



The Melodic Magpie

By Steven Katsineris

Our yard and the surrounding area is the territory of a pair of resident Magpies. They are quite tame, totally undisturbed by our presence and never aggressive towards our family. We always take great pleasure in listening to their sweet, mellow flute-like caroling as they sing in their beautiful and familiar voice.

They spend their days flying among the trees, walking around on the ground feeding, drinking from the birdbath and sitting in the high trees singing.

The pair also nest in the tall gum trees of our garden, making a bowl shaped nest of sticks and twigs, with grass and hair lining the inside. The nest is generally on an outer branch, occasionally in the fork of a tree. Usually they have two young, sometimes three. In the spring when the young magpies are active, the family is often seen

indulging in lively play, which is amusing to observe.

The Australian Magpie has adapted successfully to urban and agricultural areas and is a well-known bird around suburban gardens, farmland, orchards, playing fields and other open areas where there are trees. Magpies feed

mostly on the ground, where they mainly eat small insects, worms, grubs, beetles, spiders, ants, frogs and lizards. The Magpie is widespread throughout the mainland in better-watered areas. They are very common and abundant; except for the more arid regions and thick wet forests. Magpies have benefited from land clearing and the transformation of wooded areas into farms and pasture. They require high eucalypt tree for nesting and shelter and open areas for feeding.

The Magpie is a wonderful bird to have in our gardens, its presence welcomed by gardeners and bird lovers alike because of its lovely caroling song, as well as the fact that they feed on numerous destructive insect pests.



More Snippets Please

Let us know what is happening in your backyard. Keep contributions coming. Don't forget snippets can be about anything of interest in the environment and do not necessarily have to be about Warrandyte.

Contributions can either be dropped into the editor at 143 Brackenbury St, Warrandyte or via email at ian.coupar@vcp.monash.edu.au

Ferny Azolla

An unusual free floating fern that occurs naturally in Warrandyte on dams.



Core Area ecological burning and monitoring program at One Tree Hill

By Ranger, Cam Beardsell

Core Areas contain the most intact and significant stands of vegetation and populations of species. Conservation of ecological processes, communities and species and minimization of artificial disturbances and pest plant and animal populations are the highest management priorities. Management prescriptions within Core Areas need to be determined through the integration of scientific research and monitoring programs. One Tree Hill including the adjoining section of Watsons Creek is considered the highest ranked site of biodiversity significance in the foothills of Greater Melbourne and Port Phillip Region. It supports over 500 indigenous flora species including 24 species listed rare or threatened in Victoria and the finest stands in the Region of six threatened vegetation sub-communities. One Tree Hill supports critical populations in a Victorian context of the Brush-tailed Phascogale (listed vulnerable in Victoria) and Common Dunnart (listed rare in Victoria). These are insectivorous marsupials that nest in old growth tree hollows.

Selective logging and high intensity bushfires over the last 150 years within the grassy dry forest Ecological Vegetation Class have removed over 50% of the old growth trees at One Tree Hill. These are trees in excess of 150 years old that have attained maximum size or age class and hollow formation. Stands of grassy dry forest are termed old growth when the density of habitat trees (structurally sound and exceeding 50 cm diameter) is fifteen or more per hectare. Selective logging and a series of bushfires in 1851, 1890, 1914, 1926, 1939 and 1962 has reduced the estimated average stand density to two/three habitat trees per hectare. Only a few stands of old growth grassy dry forest remain. One occupies the south-west slopes of One Tree Hill summit. Trees in this stand were protected during preparatory works for the March 2005 fuel reduction burn.

High intensity bushfires eliminate critical habitat and populations of threatened species dependent on old growth. Over 50% of the old growth trees would be destroyed. Old growth trees at One Tree Hill provide preferred nest sites for phascogales and large hollow-dependent species such as the Powerful Owl and Barking Owl. They are critical to the maintenance of the phascogale population as the natural density of habitat trees has been depleted by logging. Old growth trees also provide the main source of

hollow logs fallen to the forest floor. These are critical nest sites for dunnarts and also foraging sites for the invertebrate prey of phascogales and dunnarts.

Fuel reduction burning is undertaken to buffer the local extent and severity of a bushfire to protect adjoining properties and to minimize loss of key site assets such as old growth trees and biodiversity fences. The rationale is that loss of environmental (or economic/aesthetic) values in forest is determined largely by fire intensity and that excessive damage can be avoided by preventing a large build up of fuel.

An ecological burning program is being employed at One Tree Hill to recover the natural ecosystem biodiversity. This is provided by the removal of vegetation closure, germination of seedlings, regeneration of significant ground flora and shrub assemblages (particularly orchids, shrub-peas and acacias) and increased biodiversity of ground vertebrates through increased food resources (notably seed and invertebrate prey populations).

The primary objective was to minimize loss of old growth trees through a low to medium intensity burning program. This is employed for areas of very high vegetation quality due to the potential risk that excessive fire disturbance would eliminate the existing shrub layer and critical shrub species or structurally or chemically alter the substrate making it prone to erosion and weed invasion. It opens the cover while providing sufficient heat to germinate dormant seeds of key response shrubs and stimulate the flowering of orchids. With investment of preparatory works and ecological burning procedures to protect biodiversity hotspots and key individuals or stands of old growth trees, the primary conservation objective was met (no habitat trees and only 10% of candle trees were lost over the two 1 ha monitoring coupes).

Timing, extent and intensity of the burn. The fuel reduction burn at One Tree Hill conducted in March 2005 covered 55 ha. The burn was mainly of low intensity to minimise the loss of old growth trees. A spring burn of this (relatively large) size has the potential to be more harmful to the Brush-tailed Phascogale and Common Dunnart as it would interrupt their breeding seasons (e.g. mid-November when female phascogales still have dependent young). Both species are particularly vulnerable at this time as the adult population size is at its lowest level (males of both species having died after mating). Shortages in food supply, loss of nest hollows and exposure to predation would significantly reduce reproductive output of the Common Dunnart.

To sustain populations of early, mid and late succession species, burns need to be on a rotation of 15 years. From the management perspective of biodiversity conservation, frequency of the burning cycle at One Tree Hill needs to cater for a number of ecological factors. These include recruitment of early and mid-succession species including ground herbs, low shrubs and small marsupials (notably Common Dunnart). The population recovery of threatened flora species (particularly orchids) and conservation of old growth trees. And the provision of adequate time between burning cycles to enable the recolonisation of ground logs and species that utilise or reproduce in the late successional stage (e.g. Brush-tailed Phascogale and hakeas).

Vegetation community response to fire is quantified by changes in floristic structure and cover. The post-fire successional stages in grassy dry forest are defined as early (0-2 years), mid (3-6 years) and late (7 or more years). The interval of each succession doubles as growth rate slows. Dead grass, leaf and branch litter (fine ground fuel) approaches the pre-burn level at 7 years (this is exceeded in heathland communities). At 15 years, productivity of the late succession has declined to a minimum level, indicating it is ready for a burn to recommence successional growth. Longer absence of fire leads to vegetation closure, lack of early and mid-successional aged habitat and the decline and local extinction of species (notably orchids).

The early succession is characterised by a growth flush and flowering peak in fire-response grasses and ground herbs (e.g. Silvertop Wallaby-grass, Chocolate Lily, Yam Daisy and numerous orchids including Wallflower Orchid, Parson's Bands, Wax-lip Orchid, Hare Orchid and Brown-beaks). Germination and juvenile growth of shrub-peas and wattles also occurs. The mid-succession is characterised by the flowering of shrub-peas, small wattles and Thatch Saw-sedge and the decline in flowering of fire-response species (e.g. grass tussocks die off). The late succession is characterised by the flowering of tall wattles and hakeas, senescence of shrub-peas and small wattles and return to the non-flowering life cycle of fire-response grasses and herbs.

Differing species of ground mammals are dependent on differing stages in the post-fire succession. The Common Dunnart directly benefits from burning as studies elsewhere have shown that a peak in population occurs in the mid-successional growth stage after fire (3-6 years). This coincides with the period of highest floristic and structural diversity in the field and low shrub strata (i.e. a combination of cover and food enabling optimal breeding opportunity). The

Common Dunnart is accordingly a key response species in the post-burn monitoring program.

A tree-trap capture, tagging and release program is conducted for the Brush-tailed Phascogale. Four trapsites (numbers 5-8) occur in the burn-site and four others (numbers 1-4) occur in an unburnt sector of One Tree Hill. The monitoring program conducted for the two years prior to the March 2005 burn confirmed that One Tree Hill supports the highest population density known of the species in Victoria. This is due to the high density of old growth trees present. One Tree Hill, Rifle Range Reserve and adjoining land in the Warrandyte - Kinglake Link form the integral section of the Brush-tailed Phascogale Priority Management Area.

One Tree Hill is considered a prime site for the Common Dunnart due to the number of mammal survey records obtained in the late 1960s (mid-succession after 1962 bushfire). However, pre-burn trapping surveys conducted in 2003/4 failed to locate any animals at the two trapsites in the burn or at two control sites outside the burn. The dunnart is now rarely observed throughout much of its range in Victoria. In long-term absence of fire at One Tree Hill, the carrying population has declined to a minimum (untrappable) level.

For the monitoring program of the Common Dunnart, two permanent pitfall sites consisting of a line of ten traps were set up in grassy dry forest prior to the fuel reduction burn. Both sites were burnt on 15 March 2005. Two trap sites were also set up in unburnt sectors of One Tree Hill. Corrugated iron sheets and concrete pavers have been laid down at the trapsites for the Dunnart monitoring program. Stainless steel cradles are being constructed for the pavers. FOWSP is funding the first consignment of these. A sandy base and grass nest is being prepared under each paver. The cradles will keep the nests dry and also enable the pavers to be slid back to observe animals in the nest less intrusively. The Common Dunnart should utilise the nest-sites in their mid-succession peak. The program may also lead to the rediscovery of the nocturnal Blind Snake (*Ramphotyphlops nigriscens* of rocky hill-crests in north-east Victoria).



FOWSP THURSDAY PROGRAM

We meet for propagation and other nursery activities every Thursday morning at 10.00am at the Warrandyte State Park depot, Pound Bend Road, Warrandyte (Melway 23 C10), unless otherwise stated below. When there is no scheduled afternoon activity we often go on a spontaneously organised walk. Propagation takes place from 10.00am to 12 midday followed by lunch. No prior experience necessary - there is always someone available to show you the ropes.

PLEASE NOTE

The nursery is open for plant sales (by donation) every Thursday. Please note new opening times for Thursdays 9.30am to 12.30pm and the first Sunday of each month 2.00pm to 4.00pm.

New Prices

Members 80 cents

Nonmembers \$1.20

Important Notice

Please note the nursery is only open for plant sales during the above times. Some members and non-members have been turning up for plants (and advice) outside these hours without prior arrangement. If you find it impossible to come during official opening times please contact the nursery manager first.



Sunday Walks 2006

Meet at 10.15 am. Bring a water bottle and snack to eat on the walk if you wish. Wear walking shoes and clothing appropriate to the weather. Walks will last approximately 2 hours. Join us after the walk for a BYO lunch (BBQ available) at 'the Folly' at Warrandyte State Park Rangers Depot, Pound Bend. Hot and cold drinks provided.

Walks are FREE. Bookings are ESSENTIAL. For more information contact Jeanette 9840 9129

May 7th 'River Walk Jumping Ck to Black Flat' Cathy Willis

Stone House Café carpark Tills Drive, Warrandyte. (Mel ref. 23 H12). Note: we will car pool to Jumping Ck and walk back to Stone House.

June 4th 'Mullum Mullum Creek' Jane Pammer, Manningham City Council

Park access track near Cnr Schafer Drive and Larnoo Drive, Doncaster East. (Mel ref. 34 G62).

FOWSP Committee 2006

Joan Broadberry	9846 1218	Treasurer
Pat Coupar	9844 1650	Newsletter Editor
Peter Curry	9844 0958	
Geoff Speedy	9437 0894	
Lee Speedy	9437 0894	Membership Secretary
Mike Coupar	9844 1650	
Karen Reynolds	9712 0797	Minutes Secretary
Martin Hiley		
Artur Muchow	0415383328	
Winsome Coutts		
Michelle Hanslow	0402251577	

Nursery Manager 0408317327

Park Office 9844 2659

Wildlife Rescue

Julie Pryor 9722 1117

Market

Marie Krause 9712 0498

Manningham City Council Environment Seminars 2006

The seminars are FREE

Held on the 1st Wednesday of the month, no bookings required

Time: at 7.30pm



Please Note: NEW VENUE: South Warrandyte Hall, 66-68 Hall Rd, Sth Warrandyte (Mel ref. 35 J8)

May 3 rd	'A stroll through Mongrel Downs-Tanami Desert'	Rob Dabal
June 7 th	'Rakali the water rat'	Geoff Williams
July 5 th	'Up close and personal with a feral fella'	Peter Voutier

Thursday Activity Group (TAG)

The activities will take place on the first Thursday of the month from 10.00am to 12md. Either meet at the depot or on site.

So if you are interested in learning some vegetation management skills and helping improve some special sites in the Park just tag along with the Thursday Activity Group (TAG).

TAG dates: April 6th Techniques of rabbit control at Pound Bend Reserve. Pound Bend Rd, Warrandyte (Mel ref 23 A11)
May 4th Woody weed control at The Common, Haslams Tk, Warrandyte (Mel ref 36 A3)

Date for your Diary

TAG Activity - Spadonis Planting

When: Thursday June 1st

Where: Meet at the depot at 9.30am for a morning with Ranger Cam Beardsell. Activity includes planting back the rare Yering Silver Gum

Deadline for May newsletter is May 30th

Wildlife Rescue

By Julie Pryor

The koala count was very down on numbers last year and only one joey was sighted, this was at Pound Bend.

Last year I dealt with nine koala deaths. In December a koala from McGowans Road, Donvale was found dead in a ladies front garden. In January a koala was hit by a car (possibly two cars) on Reynolds Road, again it was left to die in the middle of the road. Another motorist found it, but it died overnight. Also in January a koala was reported unwell in Webb Street, it was very thin and blind so she was put down.

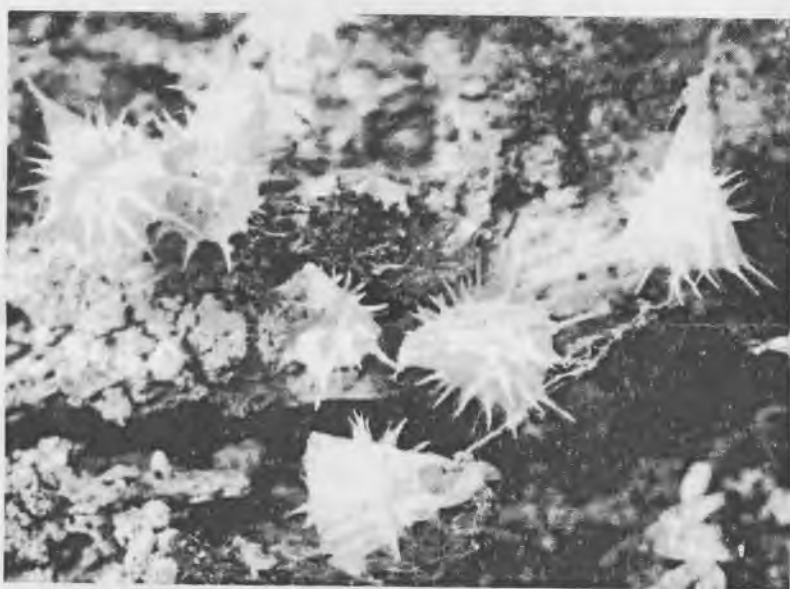
In march a very sick koala was found at Crystal Brook caravan park, again very thin and blind, unfortunately this koala was only about 4 or 5 years old.



Unfortunately a koala we have been working with in Ringwood over summer was moved out of his home range, hopefully he decides to stay where he has been put. We have also been out several times to a koala in Park Orchards it is moving around in its area, but it is suffering on very hot days. Last time we hosed it to keep it cool and it enjoyed the cool off.

If you see a koala low in a tree on a hot day hose it – don't blast it out of the tree, but gentle rain drops from over its head will help. Don't use too fine a mist as the koala may breathe it in and it could cause a lung infection.

If anyone has any old towels they are not using the shelter at Rawson has put out a call for help. Colleen has had 42 koalas and other assorted animals come into care and she is short of towels. I will be going to Rawson after Easter, if anyone can help, towels can be left with me. Julie Pryor on 97221117. Most of these animals have been burnt in the recent fires at Erica.



What is this?

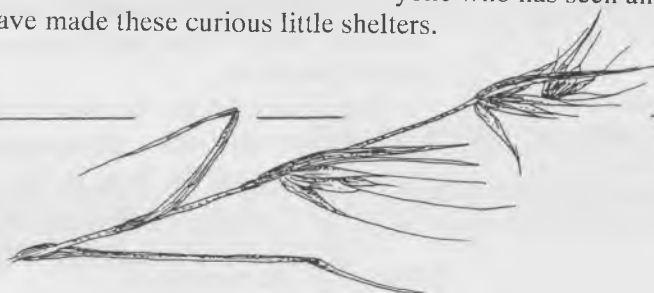
Bruce Fuhrer has sent in this photograph of some very strange unidentified objects.

They were found under fallen wood and bark at Jumping Creek Reserve and were attached, initially, at the pointed end.

The conical spiky objects are minute – only about two millimetres. Bruce thinks they are of insect origin. He has looked at them under a microscope and dissected some and found the structures are made of woven silk are hollow with nothing inside.

Although he has found fungal spores on them, this is probably incidental.

Bruce would be interested to hear from anyone who has seen anything like this or has any idea what may have made these curious little shelters.



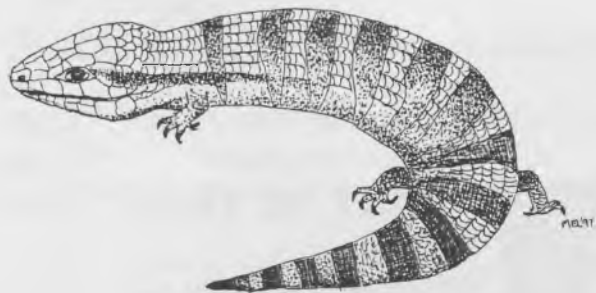
Hurstbridge Habitat.

By Steven Katsineris

Hurstbridge is a quiet, mostly uneventful sort of place, yet full of small surprises and daily simple pleasures. We are woken in the mornings by the pleasant sounds of Currawongs, Rainbow Lorikeets, Bell Miners and other birds.

If you are up early enough you will see Ring-tailed Possums still climbing around in the trees. One morning I saw three of them in a line walking along the telephone wire towards the house. As the wire was swaying about they took it in turns almost falling and after hanging on and swinging about they would manage to get upright and continue on.

During the day we see various wildlife in the yard and around the town. In our garden Eastern Spinebills, Noisy Miners, Eastern Rosellas, King Parrots and Crimson Rosellas come to feed on nectar, seeds and flowers. Magpies, Galahs, Kookaburras, Cockatoos and others visit to eat insects, lizards and worms.



There are a few Blue-tongued lizards in the yard, including a several that live in and around the wood shed. They can be seen basking in sun

either alone or sometimes two or three huddled together. Occasionally, we observe echidnas in the garden. Sometimes, especially in the mornings and late afternoons wombats, kangaroos and foxes are seen in and around the town. The other day while returning home after dropping the children at school I had to stop and wait for an Eastern Grey Kangaroo to cross the road. The same day the children had another one hopping around the schoolyard.

Like city kids most children have dogs, cats, mice (and rats) as pets, but there are lot of lizards kept around here. From time to time you see a child walking around holding a Blue-tongued lizard in their hand.

The shops, school, railway station, medical centre, bank, post office and community centre are all close. The wide range of shops provides everything the community needs. There are wonderful walking tracks where you meet friends or say hello to other people strolling by. There are good parks, reserves and other open spaces. Much of the native vegetation remains intact and great efforts are being done to re-plant and replace what has been lost. Hurstbridge has the sort of surroundings that are a great place for children to grow up in. Most importantly it has a lot of caring people with a strong sense of community spirit.

At night we once again listen to the sounds of possums, the owls and whistling tree frogs. We live in a unique little place, that's grown and changed, but still retains its essential charm, feel and character. Hurstbridge is big enough to have what we need in our daily lives, yet it's tiny enough to still be different. And in a world of increasing global sameness that's something worthwhile preserving.

Market Volunteers

A big thank you to the following people who volunteered their time on the FOWSP trailer at the March Warrandyte market: Ray Kruger, Marion Thomson, Sue Shepherd, Tony Honeyborne, Cath Andrew, Marie and Wolfgang Krause

A special thank you to Geoff Speedy for delivering the trailer to the market and to Wolfgang Krause for returning it.

Anyone who would like to be rostered on to help with the trailer, even for just one hour, can contact Marie Krause on 9712 0498. New members especially welcome - no previous experience necessary.

HELP NEEDED

As we have not been able to replace our secretary, the role of sorting mail, writing letters etc is shared amongst the committee.

However, every month we receive many journals and newsletters from other groups. We are desperately in need of someone to sort through these regular monthly magazines and organize them so that any member can view them if they wish.

Also if anyone has the time to go through the various newsletters etc and pass on any articles that could be used in our newsletter, the editor would be extremely grateful.

If you are willing to help please contact a member of the committee.

News from the Committee

March 2006

Rangers Report

- Pound Bend visitor node (rock wall with seating & fencing) works continuing.
- Entry steps to tunnel to be closed. Signage responding to Coroner's report
- Gates closed (see front page article)
- Environmental rabbit programs changed. 60 feeding stations.
- Spotighting rabbit counts continue.
- 6 month Rangers finishing at end of March.
- Communications & signage – none for next 6 months
- Moved into office – new garden beds to be done next month (Thursday morning volunteers)
- Chief Ranger, David Sewell, to visit in May

Nursery Report

- Watering system failing due to age.
- Nursery manager to get 3 quotes for new watering system

Membership Report

- Proposal to expire members 12 months from anniversary date. For this year expire only people who joined before 1st July 2005.

Next Meeting

Tuesday April 11th at 7.30pm at Rangers office

Note: All committee meetings are open to any member who wishes to come along.



My Favourite Place Contributions Please

We would like to hear about your favourite places - road/beach/river or whatever or wherever.

Bush Backyard Contributions Please

Please keep your sightings and observations coming in. Remember they don't have to be confined to the local area, we like to hear about flora and fauna from around the State, the Country and even the Globe!

Book Review Contributions Please

Members might like to comment on any interesting books they have read.

My Worst Weed Contributions Please

Even if you have contributed before you are allowed another worst weed!

Food for Thought Contributions Please

This covers just about anything and everything!

Contributions do not have to be long or perfectly written, drop us a line or two. Send by post to PO Box 220, Warrandyte 3113 or via email at ian.coupar@vcp.monash.edu.au.

More Help Needed

Do you have a spare hour or two once a month? Help is desperately needed to assist with sales at the nursery on the first Sunday of the month between 2.00pm and 4.00pm. Some knowledge of local plants is useful, but not essential.



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Water Milfoil

(*Myriophyllum crispatum*)

A semi-aquatic or aquatic spindle-shaped plant that forms an emerald green carpet in wet areas. It has different types of leaves above and below the water. Water Milfoil is a great addition to a garden pond it provides food and shelter for a wide variety of invertebrates and frogs.

Beware of a similar looking plant called Parrots Feather which is still sold in nurseries. It is introduced from South America and has become a major pest of waterways.

FOWSP Membership Form

Name

Address

.....

Tel. no.

Email.....

Special Interest:.....

Membership \$20

Concession \$10

Send to: FOWSP PO Box 220, Warrandyte 3113

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